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CHAPTER X.

IN PARAGUAY.

THE Jesuits had a fairer and better field for the display of their peculiar characteristics, and for the successful establishment of the principles of their constitution, during the existence of the Government founded by them in Paraguay, than ever fell to the lot of any other society or select body of men. It is not too late to try them by the results they then achieved, so as to assure ourselves of what might reasonably be expected if the modern nations should so far forget themselves as to allow that sad and disastrous experiment to be repeated.

After the Portuguese obtained possession of Brazil, they inaugurated measures necessary to bring the natives under their dominion. The problem was not of easy solution. The Indians had no conception of the principles of international law, which the leading nations had established to justify the subjugation of the weak by the strong, and consequently had to be brought by slow degrees under such influences as should persuade them to believe that their conquerors were benefactors, and not enemies. The pretense of title, based upon the grant of the Pope Alexander VI, was not openly avowed. If it had been, the native population, in all probability, would have united in sufficient numbers to drive the invaders into the sea. Pacific means of some sort had to be employed, so as to delude the multitude of natives into a condition of apparent but false security.

Spain had also acquired possessions in other parts of South America, and the methods of colonization adopted by the two Governments were substantially the same. Charles V of Spain and John III of Portugal were both religious

fanatics, and although their chief purpose was to obtain wealth from the mines of America, each of them professed to desire, at the same time, the civilization of the natives. Hence, as this could not be accomplished without the influences of Christianity, all the expeditions sent out by them to the New World were accompanied by ecclesiastics, and were therefore under the patronage and auspices of the Church of Rome. The controlling idea of the period was that the Church and the State should remain united, so that wheresoever the latter should obtain temporal and political control, the former should be constantly present to decide and direct everything pertaining to faith and morals; that is, to keep both the State and the people in obedience to the Church. With these objects in view, missionaries were sent out by the Church with the first Spanish and Portuguese adventurers, and every step was avowedly taken in the name of Christianity. So deeply was this sentiment embedded in every mind that the memory of some favorite saint was perpetuated in the names of nearly all the newly-established cities. These missionaries were taken mainly from the ancient monastic orders—the Dominicans, Franciscans, etc.—and had been regarded by the popes for many years as not only the most faithful, but the most efficient coadjutors of the Church in the work of extending Christianity over the world. We have elsewhere seen that the Jesuits did not sympathize with this belief, and that Loyola had urged upon the pope the necessity of creating his new society upon the express ground that these ancient orders had become both inefficient and corrupt. When the New World, therefore, was about to be opened before them, the followers of Loyola endeavored to seize the occasion to supplant the monkish orders, if possible, and take into their own hands exclusively the dissemination of Christian influences among the native populations. In this respect the Jesuits displayed more zeal for their own success than for that of the Church, and made the cause of Christianity secondary to their own interests. The history of their missions in South America will abun-

dantly show this, as it will also display their insatiable ambition and unparalleled superciliousness.

The first Jesuits were sent to South America by the King of Portugal. They found a large district of country washed by the waters of the Rio de la Plata and its tributaries, which had not been reached by either the Spaniards or the Portuguese, but remained in the exclusive possession of the Indians, who had never felt the influence of European civilization. The natives generally had been treated by the invaders with extreme cruelty, having been often reduced to slavery and forced to submit to a variety of oppressions and indignities. All the resources of the country susceptible of being converted into wealth were seized upon to supply the royal treasuries of the Christian kings who tyrannized over them. The whole history of that period shows that, unless some counteracting influences had been introduced, those who professed to desire the civilization of the natives would, in all probability, have added to the degradation and misery in which they were found when first discovered. The Jesuits desired to apply some corrective, and there is no reason why the sincerity of their first missionaries in this respect should be suspected. It can not be justly charged against them that they were disposed to treat the native populations with cruelty, or to do otherwise than subject them to the influences of the Jesuit system of education and government. Whatsoever faults of management are properly attributable to them—and there are many—are easily traceable to that system itself, which, from its very nature, has always been, and must continue to be, inflexible. Inasmuch as blind and uninquiring obedience to the superior is the most prominent and fundamental principle of the society, everything, in either government or religion or morals, must bend to that, or break. There is no half-way ground—no compromise—nothing but obedience. Everything is reduced to a common level, leaving individuals without the least sense of personal responsibility except to those in authority above them. For these reasons, it is necessary to remember, whilst examining

the course and influences of the Jesuits in Paraguay, that whatsoever transpired was in obedience to the command of the superior in Rome, who held no personal intercourse with the natives, and whose animating and controlling purpose was to grasp the entire dominion over the New World in his own hands. It was chargeable to the constitution and organization of the society, which, as already explained, so emphatically embodies the principle of absolute monarchism as to place it necessarily in antagonism with every form of liberal and popular government. If the Government they established in Paraguay, and maintained for one hundred and fifty years, had not been monarchical, it could not have had Jesuit paternity or approval. If, from any cause, at any period of its existence, it had become otherwise by the introduction of popular features, it would have encountered Jesuit resistance. Monarchism and Jesuitism are twin sisters. Popular liberty and Jesuitism can not exist in unity; the former may tolerate the latter, but the latter can not be reconciled without exterminating everything but itself. Whatsoever institutions existed, therefore, in Paraguay whilst the country was under the exclusive dominion of the Jesuits, must be held to have been in precise conformity to the Jesuit constitution, and of such a character as the society would yet establish wheresoever they possessed the power either to frame new institutions or to change existing ones.

The Jesuit idea of exclusiveness and superiority influenced the conduct of their missionaries in Paraguay as elsewhere. But for this, different results might have ensued. If they had been content to recognize the monastic orders as equally important and meritorious as their own in the field of missionary labor, and the ancient machinery of the Church as retaining its capacity for effectiveness in spreading Christianity throughout the world—if, in other words, they had been content to recognize any merit as existing elsewhere than among themselves—the natives might have been subjected to a very different destiny from that which, in the end, overwhelmed them. But they were not permitted, by

the nature and character of their order, to entertain any such feelings, or to cherish any ideas of success other than those which promised to inure to their own advancement. Accordingly* we find them—as explained by one of their modern defenders of high celebrity—basing their claim to exclusive jurisdiction over the natives of Paraguay upon the express ground that the ecclesiastical influences sent out under the auspices of the Church and the patronage of the Spanish and Portuguese kings, had become injurious rather than beneficial to the natives, in consequence of the most flagrant corruption. In explanation of the course pursued by the Jesuit missionaries, he says: “One of the first experiences of the missioners was, that it was in vain to hope for any permanent fruit among the Indians, unless they were separated from the evil influences of the Europeans, who swarmed into the New World, carrying with them all the vices of the Old, and adding to them the licentiousness and cruelty which the freedom of a new country and the hopes of speedy riches bring with them.”¹ This same author also speaks of “the hordes of adventurers who flocked over to the New World, the scum of the great cities of Europe,” in order to show that by intercourse with them the natives knew “little more of the Christian name than the vices of those who professed it.”² To let it be known that “lay adventurers” are not alone referred to, he mentions expressly the “worldly and ambitious ecclesiastics and religious,” who were “forgetful of the spirit of their calling, or apostates from their rule.”³ He casts a variety of aspersions upon the characters of the Bishops of Assumption and of Buenos Ayres, and maintains the proposition with earnestness, that if the Indians were allowed to have unrestrained intercourse with the Spaniards, “they would derive the worst consequences from their bad example, which is entirely opposed to the principles of morality.”⁴

¹The Suppression of the Society of Jesus in the Portuguese Dominions. By the Rev. Alfred Weld, “of the Society of Jesus.” London, 1871. Page 24. ²*Ibid.*, p. 30. ³*Ibid.*, p. 33. ⁴*Ibid.*, p. 42.

In this the Jesuits displayed their wonderful astuteness, and it may be supposed that they employed these and other kindred allegations with effect in Spain, inasmuch as they succeeded in obtaining from the king a special "prohibition for Europeans to set foot in" Paraguay, so that they could thereby secure exclusive control of the natives and bring them under Jesuit influences alone, independent of the monastic orders and the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church.⁵ This was a great stroke of policy upon their part, because by ignoring the Church, its ecclesiastics, and the monastic orders, they were enabled to assume prerogatives of the most extravagant character, and to hold themselves out to the natives as the only Europeans worthy of obedience and the only true representatives of Christian civilization. Not only, therefore, in the manner of securing the royal approval of their exclusive pretensions, but in the character of the Government established by them, did they exhibit their chief characteristics of ambition, vanity, and superciliousness—characteristics they have never lost.

The Government established by them in Paraguay was essentially monarchical. It could not have been otherwise under the principles of their constitution. Under the false name of a Christian republic, it was, to all intents and purposes, a theocratic State, so constructed as to free it from all European influences except such as emanated from their superior at Rome. All the intercourse they had with the Church and the pope was through him, and whatsoever commands he gave were uninquiringly obeyed by them, without stopping to investigate or concerning themselves in the least to know whether the Church and the pope approved or disapproved them. In order to impress the natives with the idea of their independence and of their superiority over the monastic orders and the Church ecclesiastics, they practiced the most artful means to persuade them to hold no intercourse with

⁵The Suppression of the Society of Jesus in the Portuguese Dominions. By the Rev. Alfred Weld, "of the Society of Jesus." London, 1877. Page 42.

either Spaniards or Portuguese, upon the ground that they could not do so without encountering the example of their vices and immoralities. The unsuspecting Indians were easily seduced by acts of kindness, and the result was that, in the course of a brief period, they succeeded in establishing a number of what were called Reductions—or, more properly speaking, villages—with multitudes of Indians assembled about them; the whole aggregating, in the end, several hundred thousand. These constituted the Jesuit State, and were all, by the mere ceremony of baptism, brought under Jesuit dominion. At each Reduction the natives were allowed to select a secular magistracy, with limited and unimportant powers over such temporal affairs as could be intrusted to them without impairing the theocratic feature of the Government. But in order to provide against the possibility of permitting even these few temporal affairs from being conducted independently of them, they adopted the precaution of providing that, before any important decisions were carried into effect, they should obtain their sanction—as “spiritual shepherds.” There never was anywhere a more thorough and complete blending of Church and State together.

Although this new State was established under the pretense that it was necessary to protect the natives against the bad influences of the Spaniards and the Portuguese, the approval of it by the King of Spain, Philip III, was obtained by the promise that “every adult must pay him the tribute of one dollar”—a consideration of chief importance with him. Philip IV was equally disposed to favor the Jesuits, presumably for the want of proper information; for it would have required but little investigation at that time to have discovered that the only motive of the Jesuits for securing royal approbation in Europe was that they might ultimately acquire power to plot against European royalty itself when it should stand in the way of their ambition. To show how little obedience was paid to the public authorities of either Spain or Portugal, it is only necessary to observe that each Reduction

was governed by a Jesuit father, supported by a vicar and a curate as assistants, but whose chief duty was espionage. This governing father was under the orders of a superior, who presided over a diocese of five or six parishes, the supervision and management of the whole being lodged in the hands of a provincial, who "received his orders direct from the general in Rome."⁶ If, therefore, the kings of Spain and Portugal supposed that the Jesuits in Portugal intended to pay fidelity to them, or to either of them, they were deceived—as, in the course of events, they discovered. They obeyed their general in Rome, and him alone.

The praise ought not to be withheld from the Jesuits, that the natives who were thus brought under their influences were better and more kindly treated than those who were compelled to submit to the dominion of Spaniards and Portuguese beyond the limits of Paraguay. They "partook of their labors, of their amusements, of their joys, of their sorrows. They visited daily every house in which lay a sick person, whom they served as the kindest nurse, and to whom they seemed to be ministering genii." By these and other kindnesses they brought the Indians to look upon them with a feeling bordering upon idolatry. But whilst they were friends, they were also sovereigns, and "governed with absolute and unquestioned authority."⁷ This was a necessary and indispensable part of their system of government, which embodied the Jesuit idea of a Christian republic. It was in everything pertaining to the management of public affairs an absolute monarchy, with all its powers centered in the general at Rome, whose authority was accepted as equal to that of God, and to whose command obedience was exacted from all.

Apart from this governing authority, universal equality prevailed. The principles of socialism or communism—very much as now understood—governed all the Reductions.

⁶History of the Jesuits. By Greisinger. Page 140.

⁷Nicolini, p. 302.

Everything necessary to the material comfort and prosperity of the Indians was in common. Each family had a portion of land set apart for cultivation. They also learned trades, and many of them, both men and women, became experts. But the earnings of the whole were deposited in common storehouses at each Reduction, and distributed by the Jesuits in such portions to each individual as necessity required. "Even meat was portioned from the public slaughter-houses in the same way." The surplus produce remaining after these distributions was sent to Europe, and sold or exchanged for wares and merchandise, solely at the discretion of the Jesuits. Everything was conducted in obedience to them, and nothing contrary to their orders was tolerated. Rigid rules of conduct and hours of labor were prescribed, and the violators of them were subject to corporal punishment. Houses of worship, colleges, and palatial residences for the Jesuit fathers, were built by the common labor and at the expense of the common treasury. Suffrage was universal; but "the sanction of the Jesuits was necessary to the validity of the election." In fact, says Nicolini, "the Jesuits substituted themselves for the State or community"⁸—a fact which fully establishes the monarchical and theocratic character of the Government.

In order to teach the confiding Indians that obedience to authority was their chiefest duty, they were subjected to rules of conduct and intercourse which were enforced with the strictest severity. They were watched in everything, the searching eyes of the Jesuits being continually upon them. They constituted, in fact, a state of society reaching the Jesuit ideal completely; that is, docile, tractable, submissive, obedient, without the least real semblance of manhood. Having thus completed their subjugation, energetic measures were adopted to render any change in their condition impossible. For this purpose care was taken to exclude all other than Jesuit influences, and to sow the seeds of dis-

⁸ Nicolini, pp. 303-304.

affection towards everything European, the object being to surround them with a high wall of ignorance and superstition, which no European influences could overleap, and within which their authority would be unbounded. They were instructed that the Spaniards and the Portuguese were their enemies, that the ecclesiastics and monkish missionaries sent over by the Church were unworthy of obedience or imitation, and that the only true religion was that which emanated from their society and had their approval. If these simple-minded people were taught anything about the Church, it was with the view of convincing them that the Jesuits represented all its power, authority, and virtue, and that whatsoever did not conform to their teachings was sinful and heretical. If they were told anything about the pope, it was to represent him as inferior to their general, who was to be regarded by them as the only infallible representative of God upon earth. That all other ideas should be excluded from their minds, they were not permitted to hold any intercourse whatsoever with Europeans; for fear, undoubtedly, they might hear that there was a Church at Rome, and a pope higher than their general. They were not allowed to speak any language but their own, so as to render it impossible to acquire any ideas or opinions except such as could be expressed by means of its limited number of inexpressive words; that is, to keep them entirely and exclusively under Jesuit influences. To sum up the whole, without further detail, the Indians were regarded as minors under guardianship, and in this condition they remained for one hundred and fifty years, without the possibility of social and national development. They were saved, it is true, from the miseries of Portuguese slavery, but kept in such a condition of inferiority and vassalage as unfitted them for independent citizenship. Their limbs were unchained; but their minds were "cabined, cribbed, confined," within bounds too narrow for matured thought, sentiment, or reason.

It would not be fair to say that the first Jesuit mission-

aries to Paraguay may not have been animated by the desire to improve the condition of the Indians, or to withhold from them the meed of praise justly due for the humanity of their motives. It is undoubtedly true, as already intimated, that they did shield them from many of the cruelties to which they had been subjected under the Spanish and the Portuguese adventurers, who overran large portions of South America in the search after wealth. But it can not be too indelibly impressed upon our minds, in this age, that they acted in strict obedience to the Jesuit system, which permitted no departure from absolute monarchism, and centered all the duties of citizenship in obedience to themselves as the sole representatives of the only authority that was or could be legitimate. And not only did their strict adherence to their system make it necessary for them to hold the Indians in subjugation and treat them as inferior subjects, but it involved them, at last, in collisions with the Spaniards and Portuguese, and obliged them to treat the latter especially as enemies, and to impress this fact upon the minds of the whole Indian population. The consequence of this was to create an independent and rebellious Government within the Portuguese dominions, which necessarily brought the Jesuits in conflict with the legitimate authority of the Portuguese Government. The Jesuits foresaw this, and prepared for it. It is a fair inference from all the contemporaneous facts that they desired it. At all events they subjected the Indians at the Reductions to military training and discipline, so as to be prepared for such emergencies as might arise out of their relations with both the Spaniards and the Portuguese. One would suppose that in a Government so far separated from the rest of the world, and governed by those who professed to be laboring alone for "the greater glory of God," the arts of peace would be chiefly, if not exclusively, cultivated. But the successors of the first Jesuit missionaries thought otherwise. Consequently, besides refusing to allow the Indians any intercourse with the Europeans, they would not permit them even to leave the Reductions without permis-

sion, or to receive any impressions except those emanating from themselves, or to do anything not dictated by them. The result was what they designed, that the Indians came to look upon all Europeans, whether ecclesiastic or lay, as enemies, and the Jesuit as their only friends. They readily engaged, therefore, in the manufacture of arms and ammunition, and submitted to military discipline until they became a formidable army, subject, of course, to the command of their Jesuit superiors. The sequel of Jesuit history proves that in all this they were unconsciously creating an antagonism which, in the end, overwhelmed them.

A violent feud sprang up between the Jesuits and the Franciscan monks, which undoubtedly arose out of the claim of superiority and exclusiveness set up and persisted in by the former. It may well be inferred that the Jesuits were chiefly to blame for this feud, for the reason that the Franciscans retained the confidence of the Church authorities, and the Jesuits did not. At all events, however, they were in open enmity with each other, and prosecuted their controversy with an exceeding degree of bitterness upon both sides. A distinguished citizen of the United States, who represented this country as Minister to Paraguay, alluding to this fact, says: "The Franciscan priests in the capital regarded them [the Jesuits] with envy, suspicion, and jealousy. These last fomented the animosity of the people against them, so that Government, priests, and people regarded with favor, rather than otherwise, the destruction of the missions, and the expulsion of their founders." ⁹ Notwithstanding these hostile relations, however, between the Jesuits and the Franciscans, and the disturbed condition of affairs existing between the former and the Portuguese authorities, neither the pope nor the King of Spain withdrew their patronage entirely from the Jesuits for some years, and not until it was made manifest that they had become an independent power, which might, if not checked, result in complications injurious alike

⁹ History of Paraguay. By Washburn. Vol. I, p. 87.

to the Church and the State. But the time arrived, after a while, when it became necessary to impose severe restraints upon their ambition, and to teach them that neither the powers of Church nor State were concentrated in their hands. They were required to learn—what they had seemed not before to have been conscious of—that the authority they exercised in Paraguay was usurped, and that if they desired to continue there as a society, they must submit to be held in proper subordination. Being unable or unwilling to realize this, they invited results which they manifestly had not anticipated.

When the protracted controversy between Spain and Portugal, about the boundaries of their respective possessions in South America, reached an adjustment, it furnished an occasion for testing the obedience of the Jesuits to royal authority. The two Governments, after the usual delay in such matters, came to an amicable understanding, and arranged the boundaries to their mutual satisfaction. It placed a portion of the Jesuit missions under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese, which they had supposed to belong to Spain. The Jesuits refused to submit to this, and inaugurated the necessary measures to resist it, being determined, if they could prevent it, not to submit to the dominion of Portugal. Their preference for Spain was because of the fact that the king of that country was more favorably inclined to them than the Portuguese king. But the history of the controversy justifies the belief that they would not even have submitted to the former unresistingly, inasmuch as it had undoubtedly become their fixed purpose to retain the independence they had long labored to establish, by maintaining their theocratic form of government. They had been so accustomed to autocratic rule over the natives, that they could not become reconciled to the idea of surrendering it to any earthly power. In this instance, however, they encountered an adversary of whose courage and capacity they had not the least conception, and whom they found, in a brief period, capable of in-

flicting a death-blow upon the society. This was Sebastian Cavalho, Marquis of Pombal, who was the chief counselor of the Portuguese king.

Cavalho—better known as Pombal—and the King of Portugal, were both faithful members of the Roman Church, and conducted the Government in obedience to its requirements. But neither of them was disposed to submit to the dictation of the Jesuits of Paraguay with regard to the question of boundary—which was entirely political—or submit to their rebellion against legitimate authority. Such a question did not admit of compromise or equivocation. It presented a vital issue they could neither avoid nor postpone, without endangering the Government and forfeiting their own self-respect. Consequently, they inaugurated prompt and energetic measures to suppress the threatened insurrection of the Jesuits before it should be permitted to ripen into open and armed resistance. From that time forward the controversy constantly increased in violence. The intense hatred of Pombal by the Jesuits has colored their opinions to such an extent that they deny to him either talents or merit, and, inasmuch as they charge all the ensuing results to him, he is pictured by them more as a monster of iniquity than as a statesman of acknowledged ability. All this, however, should count for nothing in deciding the real merits of the controversy. The whole matter is resolved into this simple proposition—that it was the duty of the Government to vindicate and maintain its own authority in the face of Jesuit opposition. It had nothing to do with the Church, nor the Church with it. It did not involve any question of faith, but was confined solely and entirely to secular and temporal affairs. And if, under these circumstances, Pombal had quietly permitted the Jesuits to defy the Government and consummate their object by successful rebellion against its authority, he would have won from Jesuit pens the brightest and most glowing praise, but his name would have gone into history as the betrayer of his country.

With the foregoing facts impressed upon his mind, the reader will be prepared to appreciate the subsequent events which led to the expulsion of the Jesuits from all the Roman Catholic nations of Europe, and finally to the suppression and abolition of the society, as the only means of defense against its exactions and enormities.